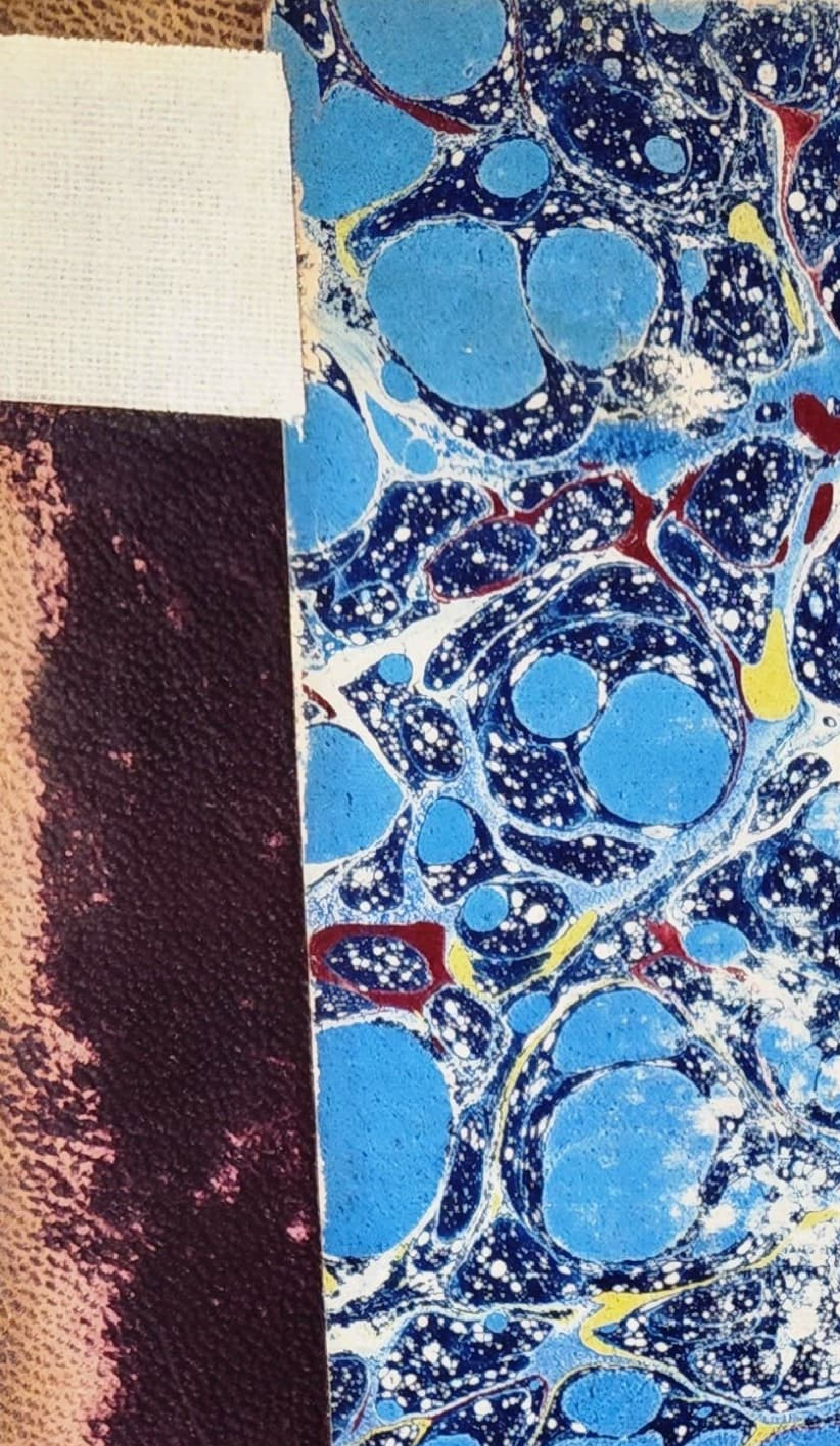

GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF BETHEL

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED BEFORE THE

BARNSTABLE CONFERENCE,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL MEETING, IN ORLEANS,

DECEMBER 19, 1855,

ILLUSTRATING THE RISE, GROWTH, DECLINE AND RECOVERY OF THE
CHURCHES COMPOSING THAT BODY.

OF THE
LONG ISLAND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY JOSEPH S. CLARK, D. D.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1856.

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YARMOUTH, DECEMBER 21, 1855.

REV. J. S. CLARK:

Dear Sir,—The BARNSTABLE CONFERENCE have appointed us a Committee to ask of you, for publication, a copy of the Discourse on "God's remembrance of Bethel," which you delivered before that body at their late meeting in Orleans. We hope you will be pleased to grant our request at your earliest convenience.

Truly, yours,

A. K. PACKARD,
H. B. HOOKER,
I. C. THACHER.

BOSTON, JANUARY 1, 1856.

DEAR BRETHREN:

Your favor of the 21st ult., came duly to hand. As the Discourse to which you refer—originally designed to be a plea for Home Missions—took on the historic form at the instance of several much esteemed members of the Conference which you represent, I hardly feel at liberty to refuse their request, if they think the interests of Zion will be promoted by its publication. An attempt to condense so many historical facts into one sermon of reasonable length, has made it proportionably *dry;* but I have tried to lay the dust a little by sprinkling its pages with a moderate amount of incident and anecdote, in the form of foot notes, illustrative of the men and things thus briefly noticed. On such a theme it were easier to write a book, than a sermon; yet, as this is no part of the design, I have restricted myself, in note-making, to such passages as most need elucidation. If only one of the THIRTY Congregational churches composing the Barnstable Conference shall be emboldened, by the facts here recorded, to set a firmer trust in the *covenant faithfulness of God*, AS A PRACTICAL VERITY; and, under its religious promptings, shall be the more disposed to "stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein," an ample recompense for whatever toil the investigation has cost will return to the bosom of

Your affectionate fellow servant,

J. S. CLARK.

To Rev. Messrs. A. K. PACKARD,
H. B. HOOKER,
I. C. THACHER.

DISCOURSE.

GENESIS xxxi. 13.

I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL, WHERE THOU ANOINTEDST THE PILLAR, AND WHERE THOU VOWEDEST A VOW UNTO ME.

God never forgets a work of faith, or a labor of love, in whatever department of his service it be performed. But he seems to hold in special remembrance those works, those labors, of faith and love, which are designed to realize the idea of his presence on the earth, and to promote his worship among men. A striking illustration of this fact is furnished in the passage which I have read from the life of Jacob.

Bethel, it will be recollected, was the place where he slept on his way to Padanaram; and where he saw, in a dream, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, on which the angels of God were ascending and descending, while God himself stood above it and addressed him. From this dream he awoke with impressions most deeply religious. "Surely the Lord is in this place," said he. "This is the house of God—this is the gate of heaven." Under the impulse of these feelings he took the stone on which his head had rested, and set it up for a memorial. Pouring oil on the top of it, in the usual form of consecration, he named the place Bethel, God's house, which

And in each of these places we should find illustrations enough.

But we need not go so far back, nor so far off. Two HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO THIS MORNING,* from the spot where we are now assembled, or from the nearest hill, there might have been seen an open boat, rigged with a mast and two sails, shoving off from this shore, with eighteen men on board. One of their number† has left us a record of their names, set down in the following order: — "Captain Standish, Master Carver, William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Tilley, Edward Tilley, John Howland, Richard Warren, Stephen Hopkins, Edward Dotey, and two of our seamen, John Alderton and Thomas English. Of the ship's company," he adds, "there went two of the master's mates, Master Clark and Master Coppin, the master gunner, and three sailors." They came from a ship then lying in Provincetown harbor, called the MAY-FLOWER. They had been out two days and two nights on an exploring tour, to find a place of settlement for themselves and their comrades, with their wives and little ones, now left behind in the ship. They had spent the previous night encamped on the snow-clad earth, under the open heavens, at a place called by the natives *Namskeket*—the Indian name of this town.‡ That morning, before the sun was up, they had knelt in prayer, as Jacob did at Bethel, and were about to resume their search, when the Indian war-whoop, that most hideous of all earthly sounds, fell on their ears, and was instantly followed by a shower of arrows. The shield of divine Providence interposing in an almost miraculous manner, they escaped unharmed, and were on their adventurous way—they knew not whither.

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* December 8, 1620, answering to December 19, 1855, when this discourse was preached—a coincidence of time and place not thought of, nor *known*, when the meeting of the Conference was appointed, nor when the preparation of the sermon was commenced.

† William Bradford. See Young's Chron. 149–50.

‡ This is the supposition of Morton, [see Memorial,] and is not disproved by Dr. Freeman's suggestion about the difficulty of crossing so many creeks [Young's Chron. 155, note 1]; for the narrative itself implies that they passed round the heads of all those creeks, "ranging up and down till the sun began to draw low, and then we hasted out of the woods, that we might come to our shallop," which they had not seen all day. If they had got no farther than Great Meadow Creek in Eastham, where Dr. Freeman locates this scene, their progress was slower than we can see any reason for, and was a deviation from the plan marked out in the morning, when they parted from their companions in the boat.

On the evening of the same day, *and probably about this hour*, that storm-driven boat, its rudder gone, its mast broken in three pieces, its Pilgrim passengers drenched with sleet, having narrowly escaped shipwreck on Saquish beach, came to anchor under the lee of Clark's Island, at the entrance of Plymouth harbor. On that secluded island they rested their wet and weary limbs through the following day, which was Saturday, that they might be the better prepared to keep the Sabbath holy unto the Lord; "not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasures, nor speaking their own words;" and apparently forgetting that they were still homeless wanderers on the coast of a strange continent, at the setting in of a dreary winter, while on the pinions of prayer and praise, they explored that "better country, which is an heavenly."*

Why has no painter immortalized his name, by transferring to canvas this Sabbath scene, the first ever witnessed on the shores of New England? As an illustration of real Puritanism, nothing can exceed it. We see them now, in imagination, grouped in devout posture around a forest fire, while "Deacon Carver," the newly elected Governor, reads from his pocket Bible an appropriate chapter, and "lines" a favorite Psalm, which gives vent to full-hearted and high-sounding praise. We hear the fervent prayers and earnest prophesyings of Bradford and

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* Prince, in his Chronology, p. 167, quoting from Bradford's History, says, under date of Saturday, "And this being the last day of the week, they here dry their stuff, fix their pieces, rest themselves, return thanks for their many deliverances; and here the next day keep their Christian Sabbath."

Winslow, who, though yet young, are much experienced in these exercises. We behold the solemnity, that rests even on the sailor's countenance, as, silently musing on perils recently passed, he participates in the service, while not a rising cloud, nor breaking wave, nor frightened sea-gull escapes his ever watchful eye.

Their landing the next day—the memorable 22d of December, 1620—on Plymouth Rock; their final settlement in that place, and their gradual expansion from it over this Cape and the surrounding islands; hallowing by prayer every spot where they slept, and consecrating a Bethel in every settlement they made, are facts with which you are all familiar. These May-flower Puritans, and those of kindred spirit who followed their lead, and planted similar colonies around them during the next twenty years, found on these New England shores few outward attractions. It was a wilderness, hard to be subdued; and when brought under cultivation, was withal a barren and a rock-bound coast. But on this very account it answered all the better the great object of their search, "freedom to worship God." And the wide world knows with what avidity they availed themselves of this dear-bought freedom. The first forest trees that fell before their sturdy stroke were framed into meeting-houses. Their first municipal acts provided for the settlement and support of ministers.* The supreme importance which they attached to religious institutions, their expensive efforts to plant them, and their painful anxiety to transmit them down to posterity, are the strong, outjutting points in their history. They may be read on old grave-stones in every cemetery where their dust reposes. They are heard in the nursery songs and legends with which childhood's fancy is still fed. They are incorporated in all the customs of New England society, and woven into the very texture of New England character.

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* The first building erected in Plymouth answered the double purpose of a store-house and place of worship. During the second summer, the colonists "build a timber fort, both strong and comely, with flat roof and battlements, on which ordnance are mounted, a watch kept, and it also serves as a place of public worship." *Prince* 204. Governor Winthrop's colony, who planted Boston and its vicinity, arrived in July, 1630; and in August, the first court of assistants was held on board the Arbella, which brought them over, "wherein the first thing propounded is, how the ministers shall be maintained: Mr. Wilson and Phillips only proposed, and ordered that houses be built for them with convenient speed at the public charge; Mr. Phillips to have thirty pounds a year, beginning at the first of September next; Mr. Wilson to have twenty pounds a year till his wife come over, beginning at July 10 last;" and all this while the colonists themselves were housed in temporary "cottages, booths and tents." *Ibid.* 313. A writer in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine [Vol. vi. 88.] says:—"So far as I have been able to learn the

And now, did the God of Bethel forget or disregard those works of faith? Did he refuse to enter those places dedicated for his abode? *They* needed no voice from heaven to answer these questions. Jacob was not more certain that God Almighty met him at Luz, and blessed him there, than these church-going Puritans were that God was in his holy temple, sending them help from the sanctuary. David was not more satisfied with the goodness of God's house.

Nor was this an illusion, a mere fanatical fancy, as has been the fashion to regard their experiences on this point in certain quarters. No. The *practical results* of more than two centuries have well nigh set this matter right in every body's mind. Skepticism itself, now looking back at these results, (if it can possibly overlook the process through which they have been brought to pass,) sees no fancy work here; sees, and cannot but see, a most remarkable coincidence between these results, and the fulfillment of divine promises. And even when the fulfillment of a specific promise is not so plain, it is nevertheless seen that their principles carried out, as they carried them out in earnest practice, must, in the very nature of things, have resulted just as they did.

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facts, the towns which were settled in these colonies for a hundred years from their commencement, did not contain forty families, on an average, when they erected their first meeting-houses and began to enjoy the stated ministrations of the gospel—nearer thirty than forty. There are several accounts in tradition, that at the raising of the first meeting-house, *every person belonging to the town sat down on the sill of the frame.*"

Take these few examples. When we look for that supporting power which sustained them during the first years of their wilderness life, under trials which had baffled and beaten back others who attempted the same thing before them,* we can find nothing peculiar in their case, except *strong faith* re-enforced and invigorated under the ministry of the word. On every principle of reason and common sense, then, we ought to ascribe their triumph to *this.* In all truthfulness and honesty they could say, as they often did in the language of David, " We had fainted unless we had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And if we ask by what means their numbers and their power have found such boundless enlargement, we seem to hear a voice from heaven, saying, " Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God." † Their very names, cast out as evil once, now fill the trump of fame, just as God has said, " Them that honor me I will honor." Though dead, they yet speak; for, dying in the Lord, their works do follow them, and give every year a deeper meaning to their words; a more questionless authority to their deeds. What reformer of the public morals, even in this age of great reforms and many reformers, could not take profitable lessons from those men, of whom it was once said in a sermon before the British parliament, " I have lived among them seven years, and all that time I never heard one profane oath, and all that time never did see a man drunk."* We are surprised at such testimony. But we ought not to be. For how could it have been otherwise in a community whose population spent *fifty-two days* every year in what, to them, was the immediate presence of the Holy One, humbly bowing before his throne, and praying from the heart, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Let any other people thus pray and live thus near to God, and you might be among them more than seven years without hearing an oath, or seeing a drunkard. Even that great discovery which they made in political science—*that all men are born free and equal*—was unfolded to their view in the sanctuary, where the rich and the poor, meeting together, paid united homage to a Being so exalted in their ideas of him, as to reduce all other distinctions of rank to one common level; just as the stars all seem equally distant from us, because their distance is so immense. This great idea of human equality, which has given them such world-wide renown, was first thrown up to their view along with the deep things of God and his government which burst upon their minds in the hours of earnest de-

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* " Many attempts are made to settle this rough and northern country; first by the French, who would fain account it part of Canada; and then by the English; and both from mere secular views. But such a train of crosses accompany the designs of both nations, that they seem to give it over as not worth the planting; till a pious people of England, not allowed to worship their Maker according to his institutions only, without the mixture of human ceremonies, are spirited to attempt the settlement; that here they might enjoy a worship purely scriptural, and leave the same to their posterity. And they succeeding, open a way for the following colonies." [*Prince,* 98-9.] The same writer elsewhere observes, [p. 97,] " I cannot find, at this point of time, so much as one European family in all the vast extent of coast from Florida to Greenland."

† It has been estimated—with what accuracy I cannot say—that the lineal descendants of the New England Puritans number *eight millions* of our present pop-

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ulation. One thing is certain; they are dispersed over every inhabited portion of our country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Mexican States to the British Possessions, with no inconsiderable numbers outside of this too limited range.

* This celebrated sermon has been ascribed to Nathaniel Mather, son of Richard. But Rev. GILES FIRMIN was the preacher, a son of Dea. Giles Firmin, of the First Church, Boston. Having completed a university education in England, he accompanied his father to America in 1630, settled at Ipswich as a physician, where he married the daughter of Rev. Nathaniel Ward, studied theology, returned to England, settled in the ministry, and, after a long and useful life, died in 1697. It was during Cromwell's Protectorate that he preached this sermon. From a letter of his to Gov. Winthrop in 1639, preserved in Hutchinson's Collections, p. 108, he appears to have distinguished himself far less as the Ipswich doctor, than as the Parliament preacher. In asking the Governor's advice about selling land, which the town had given him, he says, "The gaines of physick will not finde mee with bread;" adding in conclusion, "Further: I am strongly sett upon to studye divinitie, my studyes else must be lost: for physick is but a meene helpe." Being a Nonconformist, he shared the fate of his brethren, and was ejected, though he could not be silenced. See *Calamy*, 295; *Farmer*, 105; *Savage's Winthrop*, 114.

votion.* And if to these facts we add those more spiritual and precious experiences of God's grace imparted to their souls, of his love shed abroad in their hearts, while worshiping before his throne—turning the griefs of life into gladness, and the fears of death into perfect peace—we shall have a still stronger illustration of what God does for the children of men when he meets them and blesses them as the God of Bethel.

But there is another way in which God testifies his remembrance of those who honor him by anointing a pillar and vowing a vow; and we have facts to adduce, in illustration of it, more specific and local than the foregoing.

At a time of general apostasy in the Hebrew church, and of consequent peril to the nation, the Prophet was instructed to "cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord." The idea, you perceive, is the same with that of the text, but more fully expressed; an idea of divine favor prolonged through a period of degeneracy, in remembrance of former piety. And I know not where you will look for a more apt illustration of it, than in the history of the churches composing the Barnstable Conference.† If we divide that history into four periods of about fifty years each, the first is distinguished for the planting of Puritan churches among the early settlers and aborigines along these shores; the second, for the healthy growth or development of these churches, and the principles on which they were founded; the third is the period of their spiritual declension; and the fourth of their recovery. The limits of this Discourse will allow of only a glance at each.

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* "The Pilgrims, from their notions of primitive Christianity, the force of circumstances, and that pure moral feeling which is the offspring of true religion, discovered a truth in the science of government which had been concealed for ages. On the bleak shore of a barren wilderness, in the midst of desolation, with the blasts of winter howling around them, and surrounded with dangers in their most awful and appalling forms, the Pilgrims of Leyden laid the foundation of American liberty."—*Baylie's Hist. Mem. of New Plymouth*, vol. i. 30. "In this remote wilderness, amongst a small and unknown band of wandering outcasts, the principle *that the will of the majority of the people shall govern*, was first conceived, and was first practically exemplified." *Ibid*, 29.

† The Conference embraces all the Orthodox Congregational churches within the

FIRST PERIOD.

It was nearly seventeen years after that December night when "Captain Standish and Master Carver," with their pilgrim companions, slept and prayed on this shore, before a permanent settlement was made anywhere on Cape Cod or the neighboring islands. In 1637, a number of families from Lynn, the Indian Saugus, located at Sandwich, with Rev. William Leveridge* for their minister; and were probably organized into a church the following year.

The first settlers of Yarmouth also came from Lynn, the year after the settlement of Sandwich.* The date of the church-organization is lost; but it could not have been far from 1639, as the labors of the first minister, Rev. Marmaduke Mathews, are known to have commenced then.†

The same year, 1639, that celebrated church which

Brewster and Vineyard Sound Associations—covering the three counties of Barnstable, Dukes county and Nantucket—and was organized at Chatham, October 28, 1828, with a view "to promote, both in ministers and churches, an increase of piety."

* Mr. Leveridge was graduated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, in 1625; came to America in 1632, and preached at Dover, New Hampshire, before removing to Sandwich.—[*Felt's Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i. 191.] After his dismission from Sandwich in 1645, he devoted himself to missionary labors among the Indians, and in 1674 was a resident on Nantucket.

† Mr. Mathews, son of Matthew Mathews, of Swansey, Glamorganshire, in Wales, and a graduate of All Soul's, Oxford, arrived in this country November 21, 1638, and went to Yarmouth the following year. In 1644, he was preaching at Hull. Subsequently he was settled at Malden, where he became noted for certain eccentricities of faith and practice, which brought him under censure of the General Court.—*Savage's note in Winthrop*, i. 274.

Rev. Henry Jacob gathered at Southwark, London, in 1616, and which emigrated to America and settled at Scituate in 1634, removed with their pastor, Rev. John Lothrop, to Barnstable; and is now the West church in that town—the oldest Orthodox Congregational church in the land, and probably in the world. *

It is not known precisely at what time some eight or ten families landed at Pease's Point on Martha's Vineyard, from an English vessel bound to Virginia [2 Hist. Coll. III. 81.]; but when the island was granted to Governor Mayhew of Watertown, in 1641, a portion of them were there, who, with his company, were gathered into a church at Edgartown the same year. And the Governor's only son, Rev. Thomas Mayhew, Jr., became their first pastor—as also the first preacher to the surrounding natives. †

The circumstance which led to the settlement of Eastham, in 1644, was no less important than the question which arose in the Plymouth church about removing bodily, church and state, to some more hopeful place of habitation [Morton's Memorial, p. 151]. In June, of that year, a committee was sent to explore Nauset, now Eastham, with that view; and although a majority were against removal, nevertheless, so attractive was the new-found spot, that it was purchased of the Indians, and

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* For a particular account of the formation of this church, see *Felt's Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i. 17.—Mr. Lothrop, who succeeded Mr. Jacob in 1624, was educated at Oxford, and had been settled at Egerton, in Kent, as an Episcopal clergyman. Having suffered two years' imprisonment for the gospel's sake, he was released on condition that he left the kingdom—which he did, with about thirty members of his church, retaining their organic form. Ten or twelve others had already emigrated, at different times, and were re-united with them on their arrival at Scituate.—*Plymouth Ch. Rec.*

† It is an interesting coincidence, that he and Eliot were moved simultaneously to the missionary work—the one on the Vineyard, the other at Nonantum—in 1646, apparently without any knowledge of each other's views; and that the first convert that God gave to each (Hiacooms and Waban) ranked among the most influential chiefs of their respective tribes. Mr. Mayhew was lost at sea, 1657, in the 37th year of his age.

Governor Thomas Prince, Deacon John Doane and others, whom Secretary Morton calls "divers of the considerablest of the church and town," emigrated thither, and formed into a church-state in 1646, having Rev. John Mayo for their preacher. The first pastor, however, was Rev. Samuel Treat,* who was ordained in 1672.

The next ecclesiastical organization on the Cape, was an Indian church at Marshpee, now composed chiefly of whites, gathered in 1670—the first-fruits of Mr. Richard Bourne's indefatigable labors among the aborigines. He began his mission as a layman of the Sandwich church; but, by the advice and assistance of the Apostle Eliot and others, he was ordained over this Indian flock at the time of their gathering into a church.

And here it may be remarked that, during the first fifty years, six other Indian churches were gathered, two on Martha's Vineyard, three on Nantucket, and one in the Western part of Sandwich—all now extinct, with the race itself, except a small remnant of the Marshpees, and a few others on Martha's Vineyard; and these are more African than Indian.

In 1673, Rev. John Mayhew, son of Rev. Thomas Mayhew, of Edgartown, began to preach in a small settlement at West Tisbury, and the probability is that the church now there was gathered about that time; but there is no surviving record of its date.

These seven Congregational churches, from which the

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* He was the eldest of twenty-one children of Gov. Robert Treat, of Conencticut, and was himself the father of thirteen. The distinguished patriot and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Robert Treat Paine, was his grandson, and the no less distinguished poet, of the same name, was his great-grandson. A biographical sketch of him in Mass. Hist. Coll. viii. 177, says, "Mr. Treat was a Calvinist: and his Calvinism was of the strictest kind: not that moderate Calvinism, which is so common at the present time, and which, by giving up, or explaining away the peculiar doctrines of the party, like a porcupine disarmed of its quills, is unable to resist the feeblest attack; but consistent Calvinism, with all its hard and sharp points, by which it can courageously defend itself; in fine, such Calvinism as the adamantine author of this system would himself have avowed;"—all which is fully confirmed by copious extracts from his manuscript sermons, then in possession of his grandson.

THIRTY now composing the Barnstable Conference have all sprung, were planted during the life-time of the May-flower Pilgrims, and were the living embodiment of their spirit. In their "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience," were to be seen all the distinctive features of primitive Puritanism, — the hard-favored Calvinistic theology, so called, blending in beautiful harmony with the soft amenities of social life; the stern, unbending purpose which could look danger and death out of countenance when menaced by man, bowing with reverent submission to the slightest intimations of God; patient endurance of their own hardships, and abounding charity towards the hard lot of others. Men of strong intelligence themselves, they instinctively sought and secured learned ministers—most of whom had received a university education in England; and during the first generation they were amply supported by the *voluntary contributions of their people.* No taxes, no distraints for ministers' salaries were heard of in any of these towns, nor the enactment of any law requiring them, till the wild inspirations of Quakerism—long since sobered into good manners—had created a distaste for the inspired teachings of God.* A high standard of morals was set up at the very start of each community, and new comers who would not conform to it, could not be admitted as freemen, nor suffered to tarry long as residents. The Sabbath was kept holy unto the Lord; and even the uncivilized natives were put under its sacred restraints. Each family began and ended each day at the family altar. All public gatherings, for whatever purpose, were hallowed by prayer. And even when, for protection against Indian conspirators in 1642, military companies were first formed in Sandwich, Barnstable and Yarmouth, it was customary to have the exercises of every "training-day" commenced and closed with prayer; to which a sermon was added at the annual election of officers. Indeed, we may say, without fear of contradiction, that there never was a people since the Apostle's day, who have more rigidly complied with his advice, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." This "praying always with all prayer and supplication" was what most

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* "For a long period the disinterested zeal of the ministers, and the fervent piety of the people, prevented the necessity of legal contracts between them. The engagement between the minister and his congregation was held to be of a spiritual, and not of a civil character. But zeal alone could not furnish bread, and the wants of the minister did not diminish in the same ratio with the attachment of the people. A wild spirit, engendered perhaps in England, had gone forth, which proclaimed war upon carnal learning, and relied for religious instruction upon the miserable crudities of 'gifted men,' upon whose minds it was fondly hoped a divine influence was operating, which superseded the necessity of 'book learning,' and that the word of the Lord might as well proceed from the lips of such rude, unlettered expounders, as from those who had, by their midnight lamps, and painful watches, mastered all the intricacies of the primeval languages of the Scriptures."—*Baylies' Hist. Mem.* vol. ii. 94–5. The first law bearing on ministerial support in the Plymouth Colony was passed in 1655; and that proceeded no farther than empowering magistrates to "use all gentle means to upbraid them (delinquents) to do their duty therein," with discretionary authority to use other means, in a small way, with such as "resist through plain obstinacy against an ordinance of God." As this law

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could not stop "railing and ranting," so neither did it cure the mischief which railers and ranters had already inflicted on the community by their ceaseless appeals to ignorance, envy, and avarice, stimulated and intensified as these appeals were by spiritual pride.—Accordingly, in 1657, the General Court undertook to enforce the support of ministers by the assessment of a tax, levied in "a just and equal proportion upon the estates of the inhabitants" of each town, who "refuse to clear their part with the rest of the church or town in the due maintenance and support of the ministry,—this law to be in force only to them, but not unto others that do their duty."

Whatever may be said about the *expediency* of resorting to legal coercion in supporting public worship now, this law embodies in its preamble *one* reason for it which must have had great weight then, viz., "Inasmuch as the several townships were granted by the government *in consideration that such a company might be received as should maintain the public worship of God among them.*" It was merely requiring the inhabitants of a town to comply with the terms on which their land was given them, and their municipal rights secured. And here leaks out a secret, which has hitherto eluded the historian's search, viz., the origin of *towns*, as that term is understood among us—these "little republics," which cover the entire face of New England, and are not found out of it. They originated in the piety and church polity of our fathers, who revolted at the idea of setting up a new plantation on a grant of land *too small* for its occupants to support public worship, or *too large* for them all to meet conveniently in one place. The *town* corporation is the offspring of Puritan *Congregationalism.*

attracted the attention of the heathen around them, and fastened upon converted Indians the name of "*praying* Indians," as a stigma on those who renounced paganism.

Such were the original settlers on this Cape and the neighboring Islands. Such were the first seven churches which they gathered. And considered as the foundation-work of that moral and religious superstructure which was here to rise in after ages, they may be likened to the "seven pillars" which "wisdom hewed out" for her house. [Prov. ix. 1.]

SECOND PERIOD.

We pass to the second period, no less distinguished for the expansion of these churches, and the healthy development of their principles, than the first was for their original plantation. Between the years 1700 and 1750, these seven Puritan churches had sent out thirteen others, "of like precious faith" and order.

The church in Brewster was the first, and may be regarded as an emanation from that in Eastham, then under the pastoral care of the fervent and indefatigable Mr. Treat. It was organized Oct. 16, 1700, and Rev. Nathaniel Stone was ordained over it the same day. The present *town* of Brewster was set off from Harwich in 1803; but Harwich itself was a part of Eastham till near the time of this church gathering.

The next colony came almost wholly from Barnstable, and is now the First church in Falmouth. Twenty of the original members were dismissed from the Barnstable church, October 10, 1708, and were probably organized soon after. Rev. Samuel Shiverick, the first minister, was preaching there several years before, in a meeting-house built, in part, by a grant from the General Court at Plymouth.

The church in Truro, another off-shoot from Eastham, was gathered November 1, 1711, and Rev. John Avery was ordained the same month.

Not far from this time, tradition, in the absence of records, fixes the date of the Congregational church on Nantucket. A small colony from Salisbury, in Essex county, had been there more than fifty years—chiefly Baptists, with one or two families of Quakers—but no church of any kind was formed on the island, except such as Governor Mayhew had gathered among his "praying Indians," till a handful of emigrants from the Vineyard were organized, as is supposed, in 1711.*

In 1714, Provincetown was set off from Truro as a precinct, with Rev. Samuel Spear for their minister; but owing to the subsequent depopulation of the place, and the consequent interruption of the ministry, a reorganization of the church was effected about sixty years after, at the settlement of Rev. Samuel Parker, in 1774.†

Rev. Ralph Thacher was preaching at Chilmark, in 1690, to the Indians and a small settlement of whites; but we have no evidence of a church-organization there till 1715, when Rev. William Homes, from the north of Ireland, was ordained as its first pastor.

The church in Orleans is a colony from the church in Eastham, and separated from it in 1719—taking with them Rev. Samuel Osborn, who had been ordained over the mother church, as successor to Mr. Treat, one year before the separation.

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* There is no surviving church record of an earlier date than June 27, 1761. "But there are plausible circumstances in the memory of some now living, (1843,) which establish the fact that the church was organized more than fifty years before that period,"—the most reliable of which is the erection of the first Congregational meeting-house in 1711, the frame of which is known to have been hewed from forests then growing on the island. The church itself might have had an organization years before, with Rev. William Leveridge for their preacher, who was then on the island. —*Am. Quart. Reg.*, vol. xv. 408.

† Provincetown was incorporated in 1727, and for ten or twelve years was in a flourishing condition. After this the inhabitants began to desert the place, till, "in 1748, it was reduced to two or three families." During the first twelve years after Mr. Parker's settlement, the General Court granted forty-five pounds per annum towards his support, in consideration of the importance of the place to the interests of navigation, and the difficulty of keeping it peopled! It is now the most flourishing town on the Cape, having four religious societies and nearly 4,000 inhabitants.

The church in Chatham was gathered June 15, 1720, and Rev. Joseph Lord was ordained their first pastor the same day.*

The Second church in Barnstable (now Unitarian) colonized from the First, May 12, 1725, whose articles of faith, covenant, and first pastor, Rev. Joseph Green, were as orthodox as any on the Cape.

The East Precinct of Yarmouth, now Dennis, was set off in 1721, where a separate church was gathered, and Rev. Josiah Dennis, from whom the town took its name, was settled as its first pastor, in 1727.

The First church in Wellfleet—which is the fourth colony from Eastham—was organized in 1730, and Rev. Isaiah Lewis was ordained at the same time in the pastoral office, the pulpit having been statedly supplied up to that time—about ten years—by a variety of preachers.

In 1734, several disaffected members of the Sandwich church withdrew without a regular dismission, and were organized into a separate church. Rev. Francis Worcester was ordained over it the next year. After a ministry of ten years he was dismissed, the church disbanded, and the members restored to their former standing with mutual satisfaction. The place of worship was in the west part of the town; but the memory of the "oldest inhabitant" cannot identify the spot.†

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* Monamoy, the Indian name by which Chatham was known prior to its incorporation in 1712, was an original plantation—not formed out of other towns—and Wm. Nickerson was the original purchaser, in 1665. The progress of settlement, however, was slow, till its superior commercial advantages could be developed. But we can hardly account for the fact that eight years elapsed after the incorporation of the town before a minister was settled, or a church gathered, as Dr. Freeman supposes. [Hist. Coll. viii. 153.] The presumption is that they had at least a *preacher* among them; for the General Court, at that time, would not else have given a charter.

† So completely was this church absorbed by its re-union with the First, that no lingering tradition of its *existence* could be found among the present inhabitants of the town, when a few scraps from the early church records—supposed to have been lost more than a hundred years ago—were discovered a few weeks since, among the entries made after the settlement of Mr. Williams, in 1749. From these data, it

The present First church in Harwich was organized on the 12th of November, 1747, and Rev. Edward Pell ordained the same year.

This brings us through the second period in the history of the churches composing this Conference—the period of their growth and development. Twenty Congregational churches had been planted in these seventeen towns, not including six Indian churches, now extinct, but then equal in numbers to any other six around them, and scarcely inferior on the score of intelligent piety.* This missionary development of Puritanism was one of its first and most prominent features in these parts, till near the middle of the last century. That same earnest care for their own religious culture, which made the settlement of a minister coeval with the settlement of almost every town on the Cape, most naturally directed their attention to the surrounding heathen, and fastened their sympathies upon them. There was a time when nearly all the ministers and many of the prominent laymen took part in the work of evangelizing the Indians—learning their barbarous tongue, preaching to them in it, and teaching their children. Rowland Cotton of Sandwich, Samuel Treat of Eastham, and the younger Thomas Mayhew of Edgartown, among the pastors; and Mr. Bourne, Capt. Tupper, and Gov. Mayhew, among the laity, stand forth

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appears that the separation grew from a diversity of views touching the old custom of "relating experiences" before the congregation, in connection with a public profession of faith; and that it was finally healed by an agreement to leave it optional with each candidate to do it or not.

* Gookin, in his Hist. Coll. of the Indians [Chap. ix. § 2.] relates the following "short, but true story, of certain Quakers, who, landing upon Martha's Vineyard, went to some of the Indian wigwams; and discoursing with the Indians that understood English, persuaded and urged the Indians to hearken to them; and told the Indians that they had a light within them, that was sufficient to guide them to happiness," &c. "The Indians heard all this discourse patiently; and then one of the principal of them gravely answered the Quakers after this manner: You tell us of a light within us, that will guide us to salvation; but our experience tells us that we are darkness and corruption and all manner of evil within our hearts. We cannot receive your counsel contrary to our experience. Therefore we pray you trouble us no further with your new doctrines."

the representatives of men in their respective classes, whose names will be held in everlasting remembrance for their efforts to enlighten and save the perishing pagans among whom they dwelt.* And never has God set a broader seal of his approval on any missionary laborers. In the various published Reports of that day—now valued chiefly for their antiquarian interest — I find authentic evidence, that, at the beginning of the last century, out of the 4,000 Indians then supposed to be living within the limits of this Conference, full 3,500 were "*praying* Indians." Not that these were all really pious; but that so many had renounced paganism, and were habitual attendants on Christian worship;—while several hundreds were actually in church-fellowship, many of whom were shining lights and Christian leaders in the missionary work. This, too, was before any of the great Missionary Boards, that have since sprung up in Protestant Christendom, had been thought of. In fact it was these Indian missions, thus started and crowned with such success, that called into being the oldest Missionary Board in Great Britain—the "Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians in North America."*

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* It is a marked peculiarity in the history of these Indian missions, that the *missionaries*, whether clerical or lay, were self-appointed, and, to a great extent, self-supported—discharging all the ordinary functions of their respective callings in life like other men, while yet performing a prodigious amount of labor for the Indians. A gentleman, born at Southampton, in England, and bred a merchant, is found among the early settlers at Watertown, Massachusetts, pursuing a prosperous business, till some reverse in his mercantile affairs reduces him to the necessity of selling his property, "to clear himself from debts and engagements." Compelled to begin life anew at the age of forty-three, he removes with his family to an unsettled island (overrun with savages) at the head of a small colony, under a patent that nominates him their Governor. Here, with all his public and private cares, he finds leisure to look after the welfare of his Indian neighbors; and when his only son, their spiritual teacher, is suddenly removed by death, he rushes in to take his place—actually learning their language at the age of three-score years, that he might preach to them in it, which he does with unabated zeal till death discharges him, at the age of ninety-three. Such was Governor Mayhew.

Mr. Richard Bourne and Capt. Thomas Tupper were gentlemen immigrants, among the first purchasers and settlers of Sandwich in 1637. Possessed of wealth, energy and influence, they are no sooner located than they begin their labors for the civilization and salvation of the natives—the one purchasing a tract of land for their exclusive benefit, and the other building them a house of worship at his own cost; both, by degrees, turning preachers—the former at Marshpee in Barnstable, to a "congregation of four or five hundred," the latter at Monimet, in the west part of Sandwich, to "three hundred and forty," till called away by death in a good old age, they leave their missionary work to be carried forward by their descendants down to the third and fourth generation.

Rev. Messrs. Leveridge and Cotton of Sandwich, Treat of Eastham, and several of the Mayhews on Martha's Vineyard, with some others on the Cape, were fulfilling all the duties of settled pastors over these Congregational churches while missionating so successfully among the surrounding Indians. In a letter of Mr. Treat to Increase Mather, [Mag. B. vi. sect. 3.] we learn that in 1693 he had within the limits of his ample parish—the whole of Old Eastham—five hundred Indians, to whom he preached in four different places, addressing one of the congregations each week in rotation; and that he had four native assistants who repaired to his house once a week, "to be further instructed *(pro modulo meo)* in the concernments proper for their service and station"—thus preaching *by proxy*, where he could not in person.

THIRD PERIOD.

We come now to the third period, that which marks the departure of these churches from the principles of their founders, and their consequent decline. As the Psalmist, while sketching the history of the Hebrews, in one verse says, "They believed his words; they sang his praise;" and adds in the next, "They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel;" so does the scene which we are now contemplating, suddenly change. And yet were we to study this passage of Puritan history in all its circumstantials and details, we should see that the lapse was not so sudden as may seem from the brevity with which it must be sketched in this Discourse.

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* The origin of this important institution appears to have been on this wise:—In 1649, Gov. Winslow, while in England on public business, took occasion, in a circle of friends, to rehearse the wonderful works which God was performing through Eliot and others, among the Indians. Perceiving that an interest was awakened, and a desire manifested to aid the enterprise, he "requested that some persons of known piety and integrity might be constituted a corporation to receive and improve the free contributions which might be made for the encouraging of the propagating of the gospel among them." "Mr. Pelham assisted Gov. Winslow in forwarding the collections, and in July, of the same year, Parliament passed an act or ordinance for the advancement of this good work." The preamble to the act recites the "certain intelligence received" of the labors of "ministers and others," and that "fit instruments should be encouraged in propagating the gospel to these poor heathen;" and then enacts that Gov. Winslow and fifteen others, "shall be a corporation for furthering so good a work, and that a general collection be made for the furtherance of the work through all England and Wales; that the ministers read the act to their people, and stir them up to liberal contributions." On the death of Oliver Cromwell and the restoration of Charles II., a new charter was obtained, "and commissioners were appointed by the corporation, and vacancies by death or otherwise, have, from time to time, been filled until the present day."—See *Hutchinson, Gookin, and Appendix to Morton's Memorial by Z. Eddy.*

That there is evermore a tendency in the Christian church, and in every member of it, to slide from spiritual religion into formalism, I need not show; the whole past history of the church on earth proclaims it. And this religious formalism was the first sign of declension that appeared among these Congregational churches. That an orthodox creed may exist, for a long time, in connection with a low state of spiritual life, is equally apparent. It was the case here, a hundred years ago. It is believed that the articles of faith, in all these churches, embodied the great doctrines of our Puritan Fathers till near the time of Edwards and Whitfield. But the spirit and power of those doctrines were so feebly felt on the hearts of both preacher and people, the *religion* of their theology had become such a dead formality, that only *two* of the pastors—Mr. Russell, of the first church in Barnstable, and Mr. Worcester, of the second in Sandwich—were ready to avow their sympathy with the great revival of 1740; while *ten* of the remaining eleven gave their published testimony against it, and endeavored to preach it down and keep it away from this part of the State. From that time onward, the wide want of evangelical experience, in churches replenished by unconverted members, according to the usage which the "half-way covenant" introduced, very naturally occasioned a growing neglect of evangelical *preaching*; and this, in turn, reacted against evangelical *experience*. The strong, soul-searching points in the system of Calvin were gradually left out, and at length supplanted by the views of Arminius; which, combining with certain Pelagian tenets respecting salvation by human merits, at first denied the necessity of the Spirit's agency in the work of regeneration, and then ignored the work itself. *

And what were the consequences? Christian enterprise died with the decay of evangelical religion. Throughout the whole of this period, covering more than sixty years, not another Congregational church was gathered. Churches of other persuasions were springing into life; and, so far as they were of an evangelical character, we bless God for it. With the exception of a small society of Friends gathered on the Island of Nantucket in 1710, and two others still smaller, that were formed years after in Sandwich and Falmouth, the Congregationalists were the only denomination here for more than a century. But the *resistance* offered to the revival of 1740–44, (not the revival itself,) brought out, here and there, a handful of "Separatists," or "New-lights," as they were then called, who increased, of course, by opposition, and gradually grew into Baptist churches. As early as 1749, an organization of this sort was effected in Harwich, and several others soon after in different places. In 1800, there were five Baptist churches, three Meetings of Friends, and two of Methodists. During the next ten years the Friends were stationary, the Baptists added one, and the Methodists three. Indeed, nothing could have been more favorable to the success of an active, earnest, loud-spoken Methodist ministry, than the spiritless, formal, once-reputed Calvinistic preaching, which it here found. And we are not to overlook these outside agencies, in recounting the means which a covenant-keeping God employed in bringing back the captivity of these Puritan churches.

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* It is not easy, by a single word, to denominate the preaching here described. The strict Calvinists of that day called it *Arminian*. But this did injustice to Arminius, who held to the doctrine of regeneration by a divine influence. It is not uncommon in our times to hear it called *Unitarian*. But this is equally wide of the mark. Unitarianism was not then known among these churches in its characteristic feature—the denial of a Trinity in the Godhead—though it has subsequently grown out of it. Perhaps the religious teachings of that day came nearer to the system of Pelagius, as a whole, than any other—intermixed, however, with certain evangelical views, *cooled down to a lukewarm temperature.*

At the opening of the present century, the Congregational churches throughout Eastern Massachusetts, were in a truly deplorable, alarming state. A spiritual incubus was upon them—every muscle palsied, the hands and feet pinioned—while yet there was a distressing consciousness of their impotency to move.* But in no other part of the Commonwealth was the case quite so bad as in this county, where the churches seemed to be losing even the consciousness of their peril—a sure presage of approaching death. Along this entire right arm of the State, from the shoulder to the finger's end, the circulation of religious life was almost at a stand. The criticism made upon one of the pastors about this time—that "the burden of his preaching was, *do and live, do and live;* while his hearers actually *did neither*"—would apply to more than one of them; to nearly all of them. It seemed that these Pilgrim churches, founded in agonizing prayer, as they were, and prosperous as they had been, almost without a precedent, through an hundred years of close and holy walk with God, were now about to be supplanted, and their memorial to cease forever.

But in that dark, distressing hour, the ear of faith turned heavenward, might have heard a voice, saying, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me;" "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase : all that devour him shall offend ; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord." And to accommodate still another Scripture to the case in hand, we may add, with the Psalmist, "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." This brings us to the

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* Of the two hundred Congregational churches located east of Worcester county at that time, not more than seventy-five (or two-fifths of the whole) were under an evangelical ministry. In Boston, out of nine Congregational churches, there was but *one* left, answering to this description; and even this, like many others here classed with the evangelical, was not so firmly grounded in orthodoxy as to remove all anxiety for its safety. For a clear and discriminating sketch of this period in our ecclesiastical history, see a review of *American Unitarianism,* in the Panoplist and Missionary Magazine, vol. xi. 241–72.

FOURTH AND LAST PERIOD.

The first manifestation of a recuperative power at work in these decaying churches, was seen in the one first planted on the Cape, viz., the Sandwich church. The heart of its pastor, Rev. Jonathan Burr, who had been preaching some ten or fifteen years in an unconverted state, as he himself supposed, was touched by the grace of God. Having thus become "a new creature in Christ, old things passed away, and all things became new,"—his views of divine truth, his style of preaching, his prayers, —in short, his entire ministry ; and although a majority of his *church*, and a large proportion of his congregation, were in sympathy with their new minister, the major part of the *parish voters* were better suited with the old ; and so the gentle, bland, and now evangelical Mr. Burr was ejected. Denied access to his pulpit, as he was entering it on a Sabbath morning, he and his adherents, including most of the assembled worshipers, withdrew to a neighboring hall for religious service. This occurred in 1811 ; and on the 17th of February, 1813, he was "installed over the Calvinistic society lately formed and associated with the first church," of which he considered himself, and was considered by the installing council, *as still the pastor.* *

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* Among the collections of the *Congregational Library Association*, is a manuscript Report on "the condition of those churches which have been driven from their houses of worship, by town or parish votes, or by measures equivalent to such votes," made to the General Association of Massachusetts in 1836, by a committee

That act of sovereign grace whereby the heart of one minister had been renewed, and an evangelical tone given to his preaching, was soon after repeated in other similar cases. It is a surprising and most deeply interesting fact, that between the years 1810 and 1816, not less than six Congregational pastors, in this county, passed through the same experience—excepting that, in every case after the first, the change in the minister was followed by a corresponding change in his people; so that a schism was avoided.

By this extraordinary intervention of divine grace did the Lord turn again the captivity of Zion in at least six of these back-slidden churches, and prepare the way for recovering others. Rev. Messrs. Burr of Sandwich, Pratt of West Barnstable, Lincoln of Falmouth, Johnson of Orleans, Fish of Marshpee, and Haven of North Dennis, were "not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" but, like converted Saul, proclaimed to others the new-found gospel of grace; and, like converted Peter, strengthened their brethren. The effects were soon apparent in the more

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of one from each of the district Associations—twenty-three in number—in accordance with a vote of that body, passed in 1833. The document, comprising fifty-two closely written pages of large letter paper, is the result of a thorough research, and possesses great value, as illustrating one of the most important periods in our ecclesiastical history. It enumerates EIGHTY-ONE "exiled churches," giving a detailed account of their sufferings and self-denials for the cause of evangelical religion; and supposes that "some others of the same class may have been overlooked in this enumeration." A very laudable desire not to uncover the dying embers of former strife is understood to have been the reason why this Report was not published at the time. But historical facts do not belong to the age alone in which they were enacted; much less are they the exclusive property of those who enacted them. The world is at school, under the training of Providence, and history is one of our teachers, setting before us examples, as Livy has well remarked, not only of excellence to be imitated, but of infamy to be shunned—*inde tibi tuæque reipublicæ, quod imitare, capias: inde fœdum inceptu, fœdum exitu, quod vites.* It is true, that in composing a history, as in constructing a house, the *materials should be seasoned,*—time should be allowed for prejudice and party spirit to exude and evaporate; and, thanks to the founders of the Congregational Library Association, we now have a store-house for that purpose, where those who have but a shingle or clap-board to furnish, may render essential service to some "wise master builder" in the ages to come.

evangelical and discriminating style of preaching which from that time began to characterize this part of the State; and in the spirit of Christian enterprise which it here awoke.

On the 6th of August, 1816, the South Congregational church in Barnstable, was gathered—now known as the Centerville church—and Rev. Josiah Sturtevant, of eminently evangelical views, was ordained over it.

The next year, on the 17th of June, the South church of Dennis was formed, and Rev. John Sanford was settled the year following.

The East church in Falmouth was gathered in 1821, and Rev. Silas Shores was ordained their first pastor in 1822.

These three infant churches were all weak, and thereby served an important purpose in reviving the spirit of Christian benevolence around them, as they afforded an occasion, and created a necessity for "ministering to the necessities of saints." But in their religious faith and evangelical spirit they had the *elements* of strength, which have long since been developed.

It must not be supposed, that the new views of religious truth (or more properly this revival of the old) which began to be preached in so many of these pulpits, thirty or forty years ago, met with universal acceptance because the preachers were not sent off or silenced. In Dennis, Mr. Haven preached ten years with much fidelity and success after he received the doctrines of grace; and yet, when impaired health compelled him to take a dismission, in 1826, the *society* brought in a Unitarian successor. This was done without the concurrence of the church; a majority of which withdrew, reorganized, settled an evangelical pastor, and after sustaining separate worship for about twenty years, yielded to the force of circumstances, and were absorbed in other evangelical churches around them.

While things were thus proceeding at Dennis, the church in Edgartown, after the decease of their aged pastor, Rev. Joseph Thaxter, who had adopted Unitarian views, revised their articles of faith, in 1827, and secured an evangelical ministry without a schism, and were thus brought back, in a body, to the "old paths," in which they have ever since continued to walk and "find rest to their souls."

In like manner, but less marked, the Brewster church, after being forty years under a "liberal ministry," so called, settled Rev. Samuel Williams, of Orthodox views, in 1832. At the expiration of twelve years, he was dismissed at his own request; and though the pulpit is not supplied at present with evangelical preaching, the *spirit* of Elder Brewster, as well as his *name*, is there still, and will work out, at length, the settlement of a *ministry* like his.

In 1833, two new Congregational churches were formed, the one in North Falmouth, the other in South Wellfleet. Rev. Paul Jewett was installed over the former as its first pastor. Rev. Timothy Davis, who had been their pastor in the old church from which this came, was the first minister of the latter.

During the same year, the Monument precinct in Sandwich, which had been associated with the village church in supporting the ministry for about fifty years, found themselves able to sustain constant worship among themselves, and were accordingly re-organized as a separate church, with Rev. Nathaniel Barker for their minister.

In 1840, a small Congregational church was gathered in the North part of Truro, which, uniting with a smaller Methodist church in what they termed the "Christian Union Society," have ever since co-operated in sustaining ministers of both denominations, according to a plan of alternation mutually agreed upon.

The circulation of spiritual life still extending along the paralytic arm, reached the end of Cape Cod the following year, and resuscitated the Provincetown church when just at the point of extinction. Between a strong Universalist power on one side, and the earnest preaching of Methodism on the other, the old Congregational church—an easier prey to both on account of a general discontent with their pastor—was rapidly declining; when, in 1837, he was dismissed, the remnant of his flock disbanded, and the meeting-house deserted. In 1841, an exploration, under the auspices of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, conducted almost as stealthily as Nehemiah's was among the ruins of Jerusalem, resulted, as his did, in an attempt to rebuild the sanctuary which, from long disuse, was getting buried in the sand; and to re-organize the church, of which only two of the former members could be found. The experiment was successful; the recovery complete. The church now has more than its former strength and vigor.

In 1843, a part of the Yarmouth church, living on the south shore of that town, where the pastor had long given a stipulated portion of his Sabbath preaching, were duly organized into a separate body, now known as the West Yarmouth church, with Rev. Ebenezer Chase for their first pastor.

In 1844, a handful of earnest, self-denying Congregationalists, members of the church in West Tisbury, but living some seven miles off in the village of Holmes's Hole, and usually worshiping with the Baptists and Methodists of that place, were gathered into a church and settled Rev. Samuel S. Tappan for their pastor.

The Puritan church in Sandwich seceded from the First, or Calvinistic church of that town, in 1847, with Rev. Giles Pease for their pastor.

In 1850, a colony from the East church in Falmouth, was organized in Waquoit village, under the ministry of Rev. Spencer F. Beard.

The flourishing village of Hyannis, in Barnstable, with a population of nearly two thousand Universalists, Baptists, and Methodists, presented no providential opening for the establishment of a Congregational church till 1853; when a small band was organized, a Methodist meeting-house purchased, and Rev. John U. Parsons secured as their first minister—an enterprise altogether more successful, thus far, than could have been anticipated at the start.

I have only to add, in completing this historical sketch, that during the past year, a strong colony from the First church in Harwich, known as the Pilgrim church, have built a meeting-house in the growing village of Harwich Port, and settled Rev. William McCollum for their pastor.

Thus it appears that within the bounds of the Barnstable Conference, where, fifty years ago, out of twenty Congregational churches planted by Puritan hands, only two or three adhered to the doctrines of grace on which they were founded, there are now thirty to hold them forth; while, on the other hand, of all that fell away, only two or three now remain to be recovered. It appears, moreover, that this great change has been wrought by the sovereign grace of God, displayed, as he displayed the like sovereign grace to Jacob, in remembrance of Bethel, and to back-sliding Israel out of regard to former kindness. Not that these lapsed churches have been restored without the use of appropriate means. There was, it may be, a praying Anna, or a waiting Simeon, in every one of them,—an humble representative of those whom the prophet bade "weep between the porch and the altar, and say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them." And who can set limits to the available power of such suppliants with God, especially when they stand ready to meet self-denials and make sacrifices, as well as to weep and pray? The primitive Christians took not more joyfully the spoiling of their goods, than many a Christian man and woman, in these reviving churches, bore pecuniary burdens in effecting their recovery. There were appliances, too, from without. No less than *nineteen* out of these thirty evangelical Congregational churches have been compelled to call to their help the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, either in the weakness of youth, or the decrepitude of age, or, as has been more frequently the case, in their unequal conflict with opposing powers, disputing their right to live any longer. During the last thirty-five years, $15,000 (or an average of $425 per annum) has been granted from that source to help these struggling churches sustain an evangelical ministry, when it could not otherwise have been sustained.*

The sovereignty of divine grace does not consist in dispensing with means, but rather in the freeness with which it accommodates itself to the *use* of them, in working out its predestined results. No one here, I am sure, will depreciate any of the methods, or media, or means, through which these churches have been raised to spiritual life, after lying buried long years in the grave of spiritual death. But, at the same time, it is a fact which gleams upon us from every page of this history, as with the lightning's glare, that the one great medium through which this reviving grace descended, and without which all other means would have failed, is what our Puritan Fathers taught us to call, THE COVENANT FAITHFULNESS OF GOD:—his regard for a vow at Bethel, uttered long, long ago, turning to Jacob's advantage at a time of distress; pledges of fidelity, given and received in Israel's youth, coming to God's remembrance in an after age of degeneracy, and descending in needed mercy on children's children. If there was any show of covenant love in that procedure of God with Jacob and his descendants,—any evidence of protection pledged, and the pledge redeemed because it had pleased him to give it,—then does the history of these churches show the same thing, and demand our grateful acknowledgment of it. Even "by terrible things in righteousness" has he sometimes interposed for their defence—illustrating those awful words uttered by the Prophet against Israel's destroyers, "*All that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.*"

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* The churches to which missionary aid has been afforded are the following, arranged in the order of their entrance on the list of applicants, with the number of years that each has been aided, viz.:—Sandwich, Calvinistic, three years; Tisbury, West, sixteen years; Barnstable, Centerville, six years; Harwich, twelve years; Truro, one year; Chilmark, eleven years; Dennis, North, thirteen years; Edgartown, one year; Nantucket, one year; Sandwich, Monument, fourteen years; Falmouth, North, three years; Yarmouth, West, sixteen years; Provincetown, nine years; Eastham, eight years; Barnstable, West, five years; Truro, North, four years; Tisbury, Holmes's Hole, ten years; Falmouth, Waquoit, two years; Barnstable, Hyannis, two years.—The only churches now dependent on the Missionary Society are those at Hyannis, Holmes's Hole and West Yarmouth. Several others are in a feeble condition as to pecuniary means, and numerical strength; but, in view of the greater necessities of their brethren in new settlements, they are induced to copy the example which their fathers have set them, of making a little greater sacrifice for the gospel's sake, rather than take the bread of life utterly away from some other famishing flock.

I am aware that the idea of relying on God's "covenant with his chosen," as a principle of action or a ground of hope with their descendants, has been so often abused, that it has become, to a great extent, inoperative in our Christian experience. On the one hand, it has been made a plea for admitting unregenerate members into the church—and *half way* into it—that covenant blessings might inure to them and their children; and on the other, it has been made a pretext for excluding whole churches of converted members from the visible family of Christ, because they did not happen to be canonically put together by prelatic hands.*

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* It excites more pleasantry than anger to find ourselves unchurched by our Episcopalian brethren, not in the feelings of their hearts, (we should be grieved at this,) but in the logic of their heads, forcing them against their inclination to turn us off with uncovenanted mercies only. Does it never occur to them, that the Romanist goes but one step farther under the same logical necessity, and stops at a more consistent point, when he hands over Episcopalian and Puritan alike to the chances of purgatorial salvation?

But God's purpose is not repealed, nor his promise made void, by the misconceptions of men. Seed, properly sown, will produce a harvest, according to the promise, even though somebody should pretend that pebbles will do the same. God's appointed showers and sunshine will fall on the peasant's little patch, as freely as on the royal park, whatever the lordly owner may think or say. These are *attested facts*—not fancies; and so is the other. By all the gracious interventions of God which have come to our notice in this historical sketch, he calls on the members of this Conference—the ministers and messengers of these thirty Puritan churches—and through you he calls on the thousands of his people whom you represent, to re-establish your confidence in his covenant faithfulness; not as a resting-place for indolence, but as a basis and starting-point of hopeful exertion. We would not speak disrespectfully of the grace that may possibly filter down through profligate popes and prelates, who stand in the line of apostolic succession. Yet, we are free to confess, that as a medium through which to look for covenant blessings, we have an infinite preference for the prayers and vows of our Puritan Fathers. We know who they were, and what they did. "Their faith, and hope, and mighty deeds" are before the world, and give as convincing proof of divine acceptance, as Israel's going after God in the wilderness did. And we have also seen the like tokens of divine favor shown to their descendants in remembrance of it.

Let us, my brethren, follow the impulse which our rejoicing hearts must feel in view of these facts. Occupants of the soil which holds their dust; members of the churches which they founded; standing, as we do, beside the pillars which they anointed; we here renew the vows which they uttered. Thou God of Bethel, hear these vows, which we make for ourselves and our successors! Be pleased also, on thy part, to re-affirm to us and our posterity those former pledges of thy faithfulness. And should these rescued churches, forsaking the guide of their youth, and forgetting the covenant of their God, ever again be "minished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow," do thou again "perform the mercy promised to our fathers," and let our children's children say with us, "He hath remembered his covenant forever; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations."

A HYMN,

Composed for the occasion by Miss SALLY SPARROW, of Orleans, and sung at the close of the Sermon.

From England's far-famed sea-girt isle,
  A weather-beaten bark
Came, seeking shelter here awhile,
  Freighted like Noah's ark.

They came, not as *we* come to-night;
  No house of prayer had they.
Beneath the moon's pale, chilling light,
  Those Pilgrims kneeled to pray.

'Twas here their guardian God they praised;
  From hence their prayers went up;
Truth's holy altars here they raised
  In faith and zeal and hope.

And as their humble churches rose,
  They, like a mission band,
Preached Christ amid their savage foes
  Throughout a pagan land.

[illegible] SOCIETY

Addreſse